

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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THE HELP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Judges 1: 12-15

John 7: 37-39; 4: 10-14, 19-26

TRC We had a very helpful reading last Saturday in Bo'ness in relation to the coming of the Holy Spirit; so I asked the Lord to direct my thoughts to another field, but when you see the place that the Holy Spirit had in the Lord's life and journey here, I think He would delight to occupy us again with not only the blessing, but the value of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Mr Coates said, 'If a man has the Spirit, in one sense he has everything', CAC vol 32 p169. I asked myself if I really believe that. But it is the truth! The Father's desire is to give persons His Spirit. In one sense you could say that is why the gospel is preached, that persons are to receive the Father's Spirit. Our forgiveness and believing on the Lord Jesus and His shed blood must surely precede it, but the Father's desire is that persons should receive His Spirit. It is interesting to see that if I could give you my spirit you would think the way that I think; you would love the Glasgow brethren for instance, you would love my wife; speaking simply, that is what the Father wants by giving us His Spirit; He wants us to love and appreciate Christ the way that He does.

I was drawn to this scripture in Judges, and it is remarkable that this incident is related twice in the scriptures; it is in Joshua 15, and then it comes in again at the beginning of Judges, and I wondered if we could enquire together in relation to it. Othniel and Achsah are very interesting personages, and Othniel was given, not exactly a challenge, but Caleb said, "He that smites Kirjath-sepher and takes it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter as his wife". I know that there is an application to the assembly, but I wondered whether we could consider it in relation to a believer. Othniel is one that has overcome the world, and his desire surely would be to be maintained and strengthened in this position. He had a good wife; so Achsah then takes the initiative. She says to Caleb, her father, 'You have given me a southern land'. Beloved brethren, we have been given a southern land, have we not? As we come into Christianity and believe in the Lord Jesus we come into a southern land; it is a wonderful place of favour. But Achsah was not content with just the title, she wanted the reality of it; she asked for the springs of water. The question was raised last Saturday whether we receive the Holy Spirit automatically and I think you get the answer here. The Father is delighted to give it, but the believer needs to have that sense of need, that they not only need forgiveness, but they need

the gift of the Holy Spirit. She got more than she asked for! How blessed! She was given the lower springs and the upper springs. I wondered if we could just consider that.

In my mind I linked the lower springs with John 7 and the upper springs with John 4. The lower springs would relate to what the Spirit does in us down here, and would come out in testimony in a horizontal way. It is in view too of forming in us desires by the upper springs in a vertical way, which would lead to the worship of God. I feel that my exercise has been confirmed by the hymn given out at the beginning, Hymn 408.

APG That is very profitable. You mentioned this passage coming into Joshua, and also into Judges. In Judges it is a time of public breakdown, but the Spirit's power can still be known in such a time as we are in. Is that why it comes in here again?

TRC That is very helpful, that the Spirit is One that can strengthen and confirm us, and in the days of breakdown how valuable and how needed the Spirit is. The Spirit is power. I thought of the scripture at the end of Luke's gospel where the Lord says, "but do ye remain in the city till ye be clothed with power from on high", chap 24: 49. While the Spirit is a divine Person He has come so that He can guide us and direct us; He has power and that is what sustains and directs us in a broken day.

APG The word to Philadelphia is, "thou hast a little power", Rev 3: 8. It is divine power even in small conditions.

TRC In these references to the Spirit there is the thought of excess and that is from the divine side; the Spirit is poured out (Acts 2: 33), and that is how the Spirit has come, and these references that are before us, rivers and fountains, show it is life and power.

GBG Achsah got more than she asked, and in John 7 it says, "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink", that is one thing; but then it says, "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water", v 37-38. There is excess again!

TRC That is what struck me in relation to these scriptures; there is no restriction from the divine side. Alas, we find in ourselves as vessels that is where the restriction lies, but we had help last Saturday in relation to the Spirit hovering, and it is the Spirit's delight that He should gain a place in our vessels, in our affections. From the divine side the Spirit is available.

JTB There is a difference in the two accounts is there not? In Joshua it is “a field” and in Judges it is “the field” as if to suggest that in days of breakdown the truth needs to be supported, and definitively so; so it is “the field”. The upper springs and the lower springs would help us in that respect.

TRC That is very helpful. For us it is the only source of power. Open that up for us.

JTB We need the Spirit in the testimonial setting to defend the truth of separation or whatever the demands are on us; so it is “the field”: it is defined. The truth is defined, and we need to be defensive of it; so “the field” requires the upper springs and the lower springs, to be defended in its heavenly character.

TRC Yes, so the upper springs are in relation to what is our inheritance in worship to God. In that sense, if the lower springs are not functioning rightly our response and worship to God will be affected. I thought the hymn we sang was encouraging -

Spirit of truth, in Thee our minds find rest,
While here in this dark, unresponsive scene; (Hymn 408).

We are in a scene of darkness, but we have the power of the Spirit. My exercise is that we need more than the light of these things: you bring up the question of separation for example, the Spirit would give us help and power to maintain them.

PAG We have been helped to see that the Spirit identified Himself entirely with the Lord when He was here as Man. It was drawn to our attention last week He “descended in a bodily form as a dove” (Luke 3: 22), but He identifies Himself entirely with the assembly now. I am thinking of what our brother said about the field; there is “the field”. The Spirit is not identified with anything else, nor can we identify Him with anything else; therefore it behoves us to respect the authority of the Holy Spirit, do you think?

TRC Yes, and when you think of Matthew 13, the “treasure hid in the field, which a man having found has hid, and for the joy of it goes and sells all whatever he has, and buys that field” (v 44); that is the valuation that the Lord has of the assembly, and as the Spirit has come to indwell that vessel the Spirit would promote that valuation to ourselves.

PAG That is very good and helpful; I am thinking therefore of what it says of the Spirit in Ephesians 1, being “the earnest of our inheritance”,

but it is “to the redemption of the acquired possession”, v 14. You have drawn our attention to the fact that the Lord has acquired a possession, and in order that that possession might be kept for His glory and for God's glory, there is “the earnest of our inheritance”. God is going to come into something of immense value to Him that we can have part in now.

TRC And the Spirit makes things real. I often challenge my own heart; what a privilege we have had, we have been brought up in a good atmosphere, sitting under the sound of ministry and light and the truth, and how easy it is to just assent to it. But the Spirit makes things real and valuable, and I think Achsah in that sense had an appreciation of the field and the southern land, but she wanted it to be a real matter and to enjoy it as well.

JL I suppose it would be true to say that wells have to be dug, but springs are largely given of God, divine resources provided; nevertheless is it important that this element of desire on our part should go along with that: “Give me”. She was desirous that what was available would be given to her, and of coming into the enjoyment of it. There is always this need of desire on our part in relation to taking advantage of what is available in the Spirit.

TRC I think that is fine, and divine Persons will always honour desire. If we desire something in relation to spiritual things, spiritual resource will be made available to us that we might come into these things, and we can have an effect on one another in that sense. In relation to Achsah, it says later of Othniel, “And the Spirit of Jehovah was upon him”, chap 3: 10. I think that that is the first person in scripture of whom it is said that “the Spirit of Jehovah was upon him”. It says, “and he judged Israel; and he went out to war, and Jehovah gave Chushan-rishathaim king of Syria into his hand”. I was thinking of the effect that Achsah had on her husband. No doubt he had right desires, but what a couple they were. Here was one that the Spirit of Jehovah was upon. It is interesting in relation to Kirjath-sepher: how did he take it? There is no thought of any weapons that he used. I think it indicates the kind of man that he was: “the Spirit of Jehovah was upon him”. I think what you say is helpful in relation to desire.

APG So Othniel would be an overcomer, would you say? In the letters to the assemblies the speaking of the Spirit comes following the overcomer in the last four assemblies. Is it overcomers who benefit from the Spirit speaking, would you say?

TRC I think that is right and that tests us, the spirit of the overcomer. The Spirit would help us to overcome, but I think it is on the basis of desire; if we desire these things we will get power, power to overcome.

BWL It is the word of the Lord that is emphasised in Ephesus, and it results in the burning of the books, Acts 19: 19. Do you think there is a link with the 'City of the Book' (note e) here? And you see "the word of the Lord" increasing and prevailing, Acts 19: 20.

TRC Yes; so in John 7 you see that there are the rivers, and I suppose that might relate to Roman exercises down here; but in John 4, where it is a fountain, I wondered if that is like what we come into in Ephesians; you get what is springing up, "the word of the Lord". We come into the enjoyment of these wonderful blessings: "through him we have both access by one Spirit to the Father", Eph 2: 18. You have more in mind.

BWL It is the word of God in Corinth; which perhaps may relate more to the lower springs, but it is the word of the Lord that is emphasised at Ephesus, and Paul came there by the upper districts, so that the City of the Book was overcome and then there was tremendous spiritual gain; God's purpose was taken up and enjoyed by the Ephesian saints.

TRC In our own exercise we need the Spirit's power to overcome, overcome the world. The Lord says, "I have overcome the world", John 16: 33. He could do that in His own power, but with us we need the power that is in the Spirit for us, and I think if we have our back to the world the Spirit will then have room and is available to lead us into these precious spiritual things.

NJH The change of name from Kirjeth-sepher did not alter how it had to be overcome. I was thinking of your reference to the Spirit of truth, which comes in in John's gospel. This scripture says "Has not the scripture said" (John 7: 42); it is what is governing us.

TRC It must be what governs us. It is remarkable in John 7, where the Lord speaks, He says, "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He that believes on me, as the scripture has said", v 38. The Jews and the scribes might have wondered, 'Where in the scripture is He referring to?'. In the Old Testament there were rivers; we get them drawn attention to in Genesis, Ezekial, the Psalms, Isaiah; think of these references in scripture. Were they just references to rivers? I do not think so; I think the Spirit of God is showing what is going to come to pass. In Isaiah it says, "I will open rivers on the bare heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness into a

pool of water, and the dry land into water-springs”, chap 41: 18. How blessed that we have such a resource in the world in which we live, which is a dry and dusty land.

NJH David chose five smooth stones to overcome Goliath, 1 Sam 17: 40. It was a brook that the water was in, suggesting the free flow of the Spirit; he drew from that.

TRC That was the source of David's power; he selected these stones. They had been in the water; how long the waters had coursed over them, but he selected them and that is where the power came from.

GBG We will always need the help of the Spirit; there is a willingness on His side, and I think it is encouraging to appreciate that His love lies behind all of His services.

TRC We do not often speak of the love of the Spirit; so it would be good if you could help us.

GBG The basic thing first of all is that God is love. But then Paul beseeches the brethren in Romans: “I beseech you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Spirit”, chap 15: 30. I think he beseeches by the compassions of God because he knew the Romans knew and experienced the compassions of God. I think as we meet the point of offering our bodies “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God” (chap 12: 1), we give scope to the Spirit to operate.

TRC It has been said that these two references in John's gospel are some of the most testing scriptures, and I feel measured in what I can say as to the depth of them. But what I can see is that the Spirit will operate in all the scope that He is given, and we have these vessels available, and in that sense, they are full of something. In the beginning of the Acts, you get persons that were full of the Holy Spirit. What can I say about that? But it is possible!

JL In addition to love lying behind the service of the Holy Spirit, it very principally enters into the service of the Holy Spirit that He sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts, Rom 5: 5. That is one of the great Christian blessings, is it not?

TRC I think that is very helpful; that is His intention, one of His services to the believer, to shed the love of God abroad in our hearts. Think of what that would mean if that was the case what a change would be in us.

CAMcK Caleb proved this himself. He got to search out the land and when there was doubt on the part of the children of Israel, he and Joshua rent their garments, Num 14: 6. He was really feeling this as the Lord was feeling here. They speak of, "The land, which we passed through to search it out" v 7. They had gone through and seen the extent of it, the love of God had been shed abroad in his heart, it was operative, and they said it was "a very, very good land". You were speaking about those who we have learned from; I just wondered if, as a father, he would have been able to convey something to his daughter of the value and preciousness of the Holy Spirit's service, and it is incumbent on us to do that to encourage our younger ones to ask and to receive.

TRC That is very helpful, and we have often been taught that Caleb lived in the land before he got there, and what he saw! Think of these grapes (Num 13: 23); they were the fruit of the Spirit in that sense. Think of the moisture that was involved in the forming of the fruit of the land; it was a reality to Caleb. That is a test to me; are these things a reality to me? If they are, I will be able to convey them to others as Caleb did.

DAB You spoke of persons who were full of the Holy Spirit, but there are also references to persons filled with the Holy Spirit; is there a difference between these two terms? In the way that the Spirit came at Pentecost there was the removal of everything that was not conducive to the filling of these souls by the Holy Spirit. There is a reference to "Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 4: 8), and you have a reference to Stephen "being full of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 7: 55); could you comment on that?

TRC I am not sure that I can. I can see that being full of the Holy Spirit is the full thought. I suppose in a certain sense we are all in the time of the filling of the Spirit, are we? I certainly could not say that I am full of the Holy Spirit, but in this waiting time, are we not in the time of the filling of the Spirit where the Spirit's desire is to take the place that we will give Him? These references in John to the Spirit that we have read show that the vessel does not hinder it. So these things are very exercising.

DAB We can say one thing, that the Lord Jesus Himself was always full of the Holy Spirit. You also said we have everything in having the Holy Spirit; so I suppose we can answer the question by saying that the Holy Spirit will take the place that we give Him, and is the exercise really to give Him the full place in our hearts so that there is the full

consonance in the character of Christ in that sense, our love for the Father and the Father's love being demonstrated? It would make the divine operations in our soul easy if I was full of the Holy Spirit.

TRC I can see that the Spirit will take the measure that we give Him, and in the time that is left to us that would be my desire that we may lay ourselves open to the filling of the Spirit. He is available, He wants to do it, and there is no hinderance or hesitation from the Spirit's side.

WMP In John 2, the stone vessels were filled, "to the brim", v 7. In that case it was water; so is that the necessary thing on our part, that we have to get rid of the flesh, and all that belongs to the first man, in order that there might be room for the Holy Spirit? What you are drawing our attention to is very wholesome and challenging.

TRC It is, but do you not think that ministry should challenge us? If we are to grow in the truth, ministry should come, and I should feel the edge of it. I am not taking any place above the brethren, the brethren know that, but I feel if we are to be filled with the Spirit it means other things have to go. We speak about judging the flesh and having to do with the flesh, but these are real Christian exercises and if the Spirit is to have way with us they are necessary exercises.

In relation to John 7, although the Spirit is one gift, and we cannot divide the Spirit, I thought that the lower springs might relate to what is down here. He is the Spirit of truth, and what would be formed in us by the Spirit would be according to the truth. I thought it was interesting, when you look at the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5, to see the first three features: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace", v 22. These first three features are what the Spirit forms inwardly, and the other features, although one gift, one fruit, are what comes out in testimony; and that relates to the place that we give to the Spirit; the more place we give to Him the more these features will be formed in us.

JL That corresponds with John 7, "come to me and drink", and as you do there is the outflow, that follows immediately; that is what is inwardly gained by way of enrichment, but then this outward expression comes in testimony and response too.

TRC That is very confirming. What flows out is a result of what has been formed inwardly, and it is rivers! What can we say about it, the gift of the Spirit. As I have said, Mr Coates says if a man has the Spirit he has everything.

AMB I think these exercises are necessary. I was reflecting on the importance of making room for the Spirit. Paul writes to the Galatians about sowing to the Spirit (chap 6: 8), an expression we often come across. As we sow, fruit will be borne just as you quoted from Galatians 5, and that can be taken account of in testimony. I would like you to say more as to the thought of the upper springs and the Spirit's work in the believer in relation to the worship of God.

TRC What is formed subjectively by the Spirit in the believer is what comes out in relation to the upper springs.

In John 4, it is well-travelled ground for us, but how necessary it is. I thought of this woman; she had been searching for satisfaction. She had come to the well, she knew how deep that well was, she had sought satisfaction in personal relationships, and what she found down here; but the Lord draws her, and He speaks to her about the water that is in the well, "Every one who drinks of this water shall thirst again". We have found that! If we go to the wells of the world we will thirst again, but He says, "the water which I shall give him shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into eternal life". You can understand why the woman says, "Sir, give me this water". Then He draws her along further to something even greater in relation to the worship of His Father.

AMB It is a fine thing to desire to be a worshipper. You have been speaking of desires, and the importance of the desire to experience it by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit would help us with the desire to be worshippers, "worship him in spirit and truth".

TRC It should be an encouragement to us all and to our younger brothers in the service of God; if you feel the Spirit prompt you, take advantage of that! You do not need to say much but the Spirit is there to strengthen, and if you have worship in your heart the Spirit would desire that you give expression to it.

RG It is interesting to see that these features are what marked Achsah. She sprang off the ass; she knew what to do. She had already asked Othniel to ask her father for the field. We see how the Lord delights to bring this woman of John 4 on; He reveals things to her.

TRC That is very important. You might say that the Lord sows that seed of desire with her. He points out the fact that what she is getting from the well, the world's system, was not going to satisfy her, and as soon as she had the realisation that there were springs of water, the

Spirit was available anticipatively, she says, “Sir, give me this water”. The desire was there, and it is from that desire that the Lord then moves on and touches briefly on the moral side but then how He quickly draws her on to the worship of God.

GBG We sometimes sing -

Our satisfied hearts to outpour in His praise. (Hymn 257)

For the believer this is characteristic; you have Christ characteristically before you.

TRC Well, tell us what that means.

GBG That it is normal, normal for the believer to be satisfied with Christ, the object of our affections; it is so important. Would you say that the Lord is aiming at this, the worship of His Father? There is no greater salvation than that, than your spirit being occupied with divine Persons; I am not sure how to put it, but that is the truth.

TRC That is so helpful and right. We could say that if we have Christ, we have everything too, but I think if we are going to be preserved in our links with the Lord and enjoy them, we need the Spirit. Speaking simply the Lord knew as He was going above that there would be a need. He speaks of the Comforter; He speaks of the Spirit: “he shall guide you into all the truth” (John 14: 13), and “*he* ... will bring to your remembrance all the things which I have said to you”, chap 13: 26. The Lord recognised that believers would have a need down here and that need has been met in no greater way than by the gift of the Holy Spirit.

GBG I think that when the Lord speaks of the Spirit from John 13 onwards, it is all positive. The Spirit helps us in our moral exercises, which is very necessary, and the more we enjoy the high levels of the truth and speak about them the more we need to make sure our foundations are right and solid.

TRC We prove the Spirit's help in our occasions of being together, we cannot deny that, and how confirming that is. In recent years I have found that really confirming, that we sit under living ministry and the Spirit is free, and it is His desire that He should help us to grow and be formed in our knowledge of the truth.

GBG We enjoy wonderful things on Lord's day morning together, and we can speak about them in a very elevated way, but we must not be careless about our moral exercise because we touch these things.

TRC I think that is the essence of my exercise. We do enjoy things by the Spirit but let us see to it that what is being formed in us inwardly is in keeping with the title we have.

JL John 4 is largely connected with “the water which I shall give him” which I suppose is in connection with the Spirit of Christ in our hearts, so that we are helped in some measure to think of the Father as Christ thinks of Him. You referred in your opening remarks to the Father's Spirit being given and that helps us from that point of view in thinking of Christ as the Father thinks of Him. These are very rich thoughts, the way we consider and love both of these other Persons of the Godhead.

TRC It is helpful to see what the work of each divine Person is, and it is to one end. The Father delights to make much of Christ and the Spirit's delight is to do that too. The delight of the servant on the journey in Genesis 24 was to make much of Isaac, speaking to us of the Holy Spirit occupying with all that belongs to Christ.

JL There must necessarily be the work of inward formation, but these are very exalted thoughts that we should have feelings and sensitivities and intelligence in relation to the way that Christ thinks concerning the Father, and the way that the Father thinks concerning His own beloved Son. The Spirit of God helps us to grow in intelligence in what these directions are.

TRC Could we know it in any other way?

NJH Why is it that Christ had to be glorified before the Spirit came? Give us a touch on that.

TRC You can help, but it required that there was a Man in heaven. The work of Christ, the work of redemption was completed entirely to the Father's delight, and He is received in glory. And the Spirit came from that realm, and from that time after the ten days; the Spirit comes from that area where Christ is glorified.

NJH According to Romans we are glorified as receiving the Spirit. It means that in a certain sense we are brought into moral conformity to One that is above, by the Spirit. I am linking on with where we read that the Spirit had not come because Christ had not yet been glorified. It is a very touching movement.

TRC The Spirit has come from an area where Christ is in His rightful place; He brings the wealth of that to our hearts and can make that

known to us.

PAG In John 4, we are set free from the demand of sin by the presence of the Holy Spirit, but in John 5 we are set free from the demand of the law by the knowledge of the Father, and in John 6 we are set free from the demand of the world by feeding on Christ. But if that is all so, if we have been set free, what have we been set free for? We need a new object and that is why the Spirit comes from a Man in the glory; it is to give us a new object that has nothing to do with this world. There is no point to be set free just to carry on in this world; we need to be set free to be taken out of it.

TRC That is very fine! The Spirit in that sense has seen Christ in that place of exaltation and that is now the object for us. The Spirit would lift our eyesight, the upper springs would do that, lift our eyesight to an area of worship, an area where Christ is glorified and is the object in that scene above.

APG The Lord's word "filled with power from on high"; that is a very dignified position.

TRC I think that is right and that is what struck me. What the Lord says in relation to the Spirit is worthy of our consideration, "but do ye remain in the city till ye be clothed with power from on high". A person down here indwelt with the Spirit is a dignified person. Let us see to it that we act like it. If the Spirit has way with us, we will.

GBG It says, "clothed with power from on high"; that is what is seen. Would it be right to say that the features of the Spirit Himself would be seen?

TRC Yes, you have something in mind. I can see that the Spirit is forming features of Christ in us, but I am sure that what can be seen of the features of the Spirit must be linked to that.

GBG We normally speak about the Spirit forming features of Christ in us. The Spirit Himself is a very feeling Person. But this is power for the testimony, "clothed with power from on high", and that is what the apostles had. The apostle Paul in Thessalonians speaks about yearning over those young believers (1 Thess 2: 8); that is a feature of the Spirit - that is an inward thing of course, while being "clothed" is more outward. I would like to hear what you and others say about it.

TRC I am glad of what you say. We have a hymn about the Spirit, striving here with men, (Hymn 109), and there is a certain urgency with

that. The Spirit is looking for ground to work on.

BWL Although the Spirit has not become incarnate, He is just like Christ, is He not?

TRC I think that answers the question!

JTB The “raiment of embroidery” in Psalm 45: 14 might link with what we are saying: that seems to suggest the decorative work of the Holy Spirit.

TRC What has been formed within (v 13) comes out into expression: “her clothing is of wrought gold”. Then it says, “She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of embroidery”, which would involve the detail of the Spirit’s work.

JTB Embroidery is intricate work, stitch by stitch. I suppose that enters into our personal pathways. There is a reference in the psalms, “Passing through the valley of Baca, they make it a well-spring”, Ps 84: 6. Do you think as we traverse our own personal pathways and all that enters into them in so many different ways, the well-spring is proved? The volume of water increases and has its outlet upwards in the well-spring. The well-spring might connect with the upper springs.

TRC What comes out in expression in response is what the Spirit has formed in us. Many brethren are under pressure, bearing things, but the Spirit is available to not only comfort but strengthen and form us in relation to Christ.

DW We need to make full use of the Spirit within us. I was thinking of that poor widow woman, all she had was a pot of oil; but when it was used, she and her sons could live on the rest, 2 Kings 4: 1-7. We need to live in the full power of what has been given to us.

TRC That is a good reference, and that widow undervalued what she had. When the oil came into circulation, she could live on the rest, it was more than enough. We should desire to give the Spirit greater place, and our appreciation of Him should increase too. He is a divine Person and He has been given to us.

SMcL In John 4: 23, the Lord says, “the hour is coming and now is”. I am interested in that expression “and now is”. The service of God is proceeding now, and if we are to have any part in it, we should be susceptible to the prompting of the Holy Spirit within us. How would that work out practically in our experience?

TRC We can be in the spirit of worship at any time. We often speak in relation to the breaking of bread and the service of God, and how right that is, and that continues. What a privilege it is to have part in the service of God! But I do not think “now is” is limited to our occasions of being together. We can see in Paul’s writing the way that he is moved to doxologies; no doubt the promptings of the Spirit brought about worship to God. Would that fit with what you had in mind?

SMcL Paul wrote with a worshipful spirit, obviously in communion with divine Persons.

TRC If we are preserved in the sense of mercy, as Paul was, and preserved in the valuation of what has been brought to us, we have the southern land; but we have been given the gift of the Spirit, and I think that would help us in relation to having a worshipful spirit.

WMP Paul says in the Philippian epistle, “we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and boast in Christ Jesus, and do not trust in flesh”, chap 3: 3. But here the expression is “worship ... in spirit and truth”. What is your impression that that expression might convey to us?

TRC There are others that can help. The Lord says, “worship ... in spirit”; it is the way that it is done, but does “in truth” bring out the reality of it, that there is the side that we can only approach the Father through Christ by one Spirit? That is essential, but then the truth would show us that there has been a moral basis for our access to the Father that we are in the gain of. From the divine side everything has been met righteously, but from our side are we morally in keeping with our approach to the Father?

WMP I can see that it is not a matter of our minds exactly, nor is it ritual. Do you think “in spirit and truth” would involve a certain vitality and life in our response, and the truth would no doubt bring in the full revelation of God which you brought before us, the way that He has been made known to us in Father, Son and Holy Spirit. You can see that it must be a full answer to the Father.

TRC Yes; in the Old Testament David says, “of that which is from thy hand have we given thee”, 1 Chron 29: 14. It is entirely what has been wrought in our hearts, not our minds; that is what we bring in worship to God.

JTB Does the Spirit link with the character of the persons He

indwells? I was thinking about the reference in Romans, “ye have received a spirit of adoption”; it is a small 's' there. Of course, it is the spirit of sonship, but I think it relates to the character of persons who are worshipping.

TRC It is as if my spirit is in line with the Holy Spirit.

GBG The woman in John 4 was concerned about place, but the Lord says that is not the point.

TRC You mean she is thinking, “in this mountain” or “in Jerusalem”? The Lord says, “But the hour is coming and now is”. The time for worship is now. We can worship at any time.

And may it be so.

Dundee

12th April 2025

List of initials:-

A M Brown, Linlithgow; D A Brown, Bo'ness; J T Brown, Edinburgh;
T R Campbell, Glasgow; R Gardiner, Aberdeen; A P Grant, Dundee;
G B Grant, Dundee; P A Gray, Linlithgow; N J Henry, Glasgow; J Laurie,
Brechin; B W Lovie, Aberdeen; C A McKay, Brechin; S McLaren,
Kirkcaldy; W M Patterson, Glasgow; D Walker, Dundee

THREE OF TITLES OF THE LORD JESUS

Trevor R Campbell

Isaiah 53: 2-7

Ephesians 5: 25-27

I have been led, beloved brethren, to speak of three titles of the Lord Jesus: the Man of sorrows; the Man of patience; and the Man of joy. The Man of patience and the Man of joy are not exactly scriptural expressions, but I think you will see as we proceed that He is worthy, and we are entitled to view and to appreciate the Lord, as the Man of patience and the Man of joy.

Firstly, to consider the Man of sorrows: what food He is for our souls. If any of our younger brethren or us all have not read Mr Darby's poem, 'The Man of Sorrows', I would commend it to you. We have three hymns in our hymnbooks that are part of it, but read it, 'The Man of sorrows', and contemplate the One that is spoken of. What a life the Lord Jesus led, "a man of sorrows", as we have read the prophet Isaiah writes, "and acquainted with grief". I feel measured as to what I can say in relation to the depth of that sorrow, but lying behind that pathway of sorrow was love for you and for me. He was "a man of sorrows" because of us. I trust that touches your affections, beloved. Think of what it meant to Him as the Lord of glory coming into this scene and seeing the ravages of sin upon the human race. We could never measure the depth of sorrow which entered into the Lord's heart in relation to sin. Sin would have been a constant source of sorrow to Him. If the scripture says of Lot, a man so practically away from God, "tormented his righteous soul" (2 Pet 2: 8) in relation to what he saw and what he heard in Sodom, how much more, beloved, the Lord Jesus, the One "who knew not sin" (2 Cor 5: 21); of whom it says, "in him sin is not" (1 John 3: 5), and "who did no sin", 1 Pet 2: 22. How blessed it is to contemplate that blessed Man here. Think of the afflictions, what He endured at the hands of men, and then those that were inflicted. Think of the sorrow in relation to what sin had brought about in man. What it meant to Him when faced with every affliction down here that man was under. Did it not all bear upon Him? How much was on account of sin? The sorrows, too, of men were His in heart. He bore their sicknesses, and carried their infirmities; not a sorrow nor an affliction He met that He did not bear on His heart as His own. "In all their affliction He was afflicted", Isa 63: 9. How blessed to take account of such a Man in a

world of sin, yet apart from it, but feeling in its intensity what the sorrow was, and He bore it.

As Mr Darby writes in 'The Sufferings of Christ', 'He bore in His spirit what He would take away in His power', vol 7 p172. Think of what sorrow entered into that life, what was compressed, you might say, into these three and a half years when He was here under the eye of God, under the will of God, in perfection, but feeling the sorrow of such a path. That pathway led to the cross. Think of these movements:

The Man of sorrows wends His way (Hymn 245).

In John's gospel chapter 12 the Lord Jesus says, "Father, save me from this hour". He says, "Now is my soul troubled", v 27. He knew in its entirety where that pathway of sorrow would lead Him.

And then what food for our souls it is to take account of the Man of sorrows in Gethsemane. Think of what He bore there at the prospect of that cup that He accepted from the Father! Only He knew what was in that cup and the depth of it. How we can apply to the Lord the words, "see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow", Lam 1: 12. These things are for our contemplation, beloved, the Man of sorrows, and there in Gethsemane bearing in His spirit all that was before Him. May our hearts go out to Him! He went that way for you, the One who had the right to everything in this scene, yet He came into this world and was found as a Man of sorrows. It is food for our souls.

He had known desertion, betrayal and denial; yet He bore it all. Then on the cross, we can think of Him bearing every indignity that man could bring to bear and could put upon Him. He bore it from His creatures. What sorrow. And then it says in Lamentations, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me". He "looked for sympathy, but there was none; and for comforters, but ... found none", Ps 69: 20. He was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief". And then we come to the forsaking by His God. May our hearts go out to Him, beloved; may your heart be touched in relation to that blessed One! There is no one like Him.

And then I turn to Ephesians because I think you see both the Man of patience and the Man of joy in this one scripture. When the Lord was here, He was a Man of patience, was He not? If you go to the Psalms, it says, "I waited patiently for Jehovah; and he inclined unto

me, and heard my cry”, Ps 40: 1. That was in His life here, the patient One, always looking, His ear inclined to the Father's voice. How blessed. He was waiting for the call, waiting for the Father's will. In John 11 when the Lord waited these three days, Lazarus had died, and the Lord waited. Things were being worked out. The Lord never moved ahead of the Father's will. What contemplation for our souls and at the present time He is a Man of patience, waiting the Father's time, the time of the rapture when we shall go to be with Him. It will be soon. It is in the Father's time, and the Lord is waiting patiently. What is He doing in the waiting time? He is active. The Man of patience is active in relation to His assembly. Think of that, beloved, His chief interest at the present time. It says, “that he might sanctify it, purifying it by the washing of water by the word”. How blessed. That work is continuing, I venture to say, at the present time when the Lord is serving His own. He is looking at every blemish He sees to gently wipe it away. Anything that is in my heart that is not in keeping with Him, He is gently working, using ministry, using His own voice, the voice of the Spirit, working gently with each one of us that these blemishes might be removed, “washing of water by the word”. How patient He is.

But then, too He is a Man of joy. What is before Him? While He was here, think of what His time here was to Him. While there was the sorrow that we have spoken of, there were joys. He says, “I came out from the Father ... and go to the Father”, John 16: 28. What joy that must have been to the Lord's heart that that was assured, but beloved brethren, the Lord's joy at the present time is in the assembly. It is what His chief interest is, and He is waiting patiently for that fulness of joy when He will have the assembly, when He will have His own eternally with Himself. Think of the Lord saying to His own, “I go to prepare you a place”, John 14: 2. Was that not a matter of joy that a place was going to be prepared for His own? How blessed these things are.

I commend these thoughts to you, beloved. These features of sorrow, patience and joy are to have a reflection in ourselves. Some of our brethren are going through times of sorrow, but the Lord uses times of sorrow. What a thing it is. While we are here, there is so much to distract us. The poet said,

I walked a mile with Pleasure;
She chatted all the way;
But left me none the wiser
For all she had to say.

I walked a mile with Sorrow,
And ne'er a word said she;
But, oh. the things I learned from her,
When Sorrow walked with me.

Robert Browning Hamilton (1867-1950)

How blessed. We know times of sorrow. Beloved, we have been through times of sorrow. It is a sorrow that we do not have brethren that we once walked with available to us; we feel that. The Lord feels it. In John 6, was it not a matter of sorrow to Him when He said, "Will ye also go away?", v 67. What a matter. Let us cleave to the Lord Jesus. Peter says, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" v 68. Let us cleave to Him, cleave to the truth and cleave to Paul's ministry. We speak of these things but let them be real. The practical matters that enter into Paul's ministry, let them be real to us. Let the Spirit have sway in our hearts as we take account of the pathway of sorrow.

And then it is a pathway of patience too but in the waiting time, beloved, we can be assured of divine resource. When the Lord was here, He had the Father and the Spirit and so do we. Paul writes to the Thessalonians and he says to them, "But the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of the Christ", 2 Thess 3: 5. What a thing to know. It is what lies behind the believer's walk, "the love of God", and it is a time of patience when we are waiting for the Lord to come.

May we redeem the time for there is joy before us. How blessed. What a hope we have. He is a Man of joy, looking forward to that time when He will rapture us to be with Himself. What joy, therefore, should be in our hearts. How blessed to have Christ in your heart and the hope of His coming.

I commend these thoughts to you: the Man of sorrows - may we contemplate all that the Lord Jesus has done, all that He has borne. He is a Man of patience, but He is a Man of joy, and so it will be when we shall see Him face to face. Think of that. What joy. What will it be to see the Lord for the first time face to face? May it be our portion, and may we be encouraged in the waiting time and may the Lord bless the word.

Dundee

12th April 2025

SEARCHING AND FINDING

Rodney Brown

Proverbs 25: 1, 2

Acts 17: 10-12 (to “believed”)

1 Corinthians 2: 9, 10

Colossians 3: 1-4

It will be evident that these scriptures refer to what is hidden and what can be found. We had that before us on Lord's day at the Supper, and in the reading, in relation to the treasure hid in the field and also in relation to the merchant seeking beautiful pearls, “and having found one pearl of great value ... sold whatever he had”, Matt 13: 44-46. So he sought something that was not readily accessible, and he found it; and there seems to be a particular recompense in that - finding the thing you are looking for is the objective. As to spiritual things, everything comes to us when we first believe, when we put our trust in the Lord and in His blood and we benefit from the gifts that God has given, that He has bestowed in His love. God is a giving God, as we are often reminded, and He has given His best, in His Son and in the Holy Spirit. And these things are ours, as we believe in faith and lay hold of them. But then we come into the enjoyment of them as we search things out. Not everything is on the surface: spiritual things are hidden from the natural mind, so there is recompense in searching things out. The scripture makes that clear.

We spoke of the verse in Proverbs on Lord's day. It is the glory of *God* to conceal a thing, and I think that relates to the treasure in the field that we were occupied with. What was hidden in God's purpose came to light when the Lord came into manhood, and He valued it so much that He gave what He had to secure it, JT vol 27 p308. The treasure is to be found in the assembly, and that was borne out by what we had in the reading. That treasure is not therefore evident to the natural man, it cannot be taken account of naturally, but there is no doubt that it exists and there is glory attached to it; and there is a certain glory in searching it out, coming into the enjoyment of it, benefitting from what is available in the assembly. And, more than that, there is what is for the glory of God. So God has concealed things, but then as we search them out, it returns glory to Him, it glorifies God. We come into the benefit of them.

The setting here is the glory of a king; so the scripture would

present it as a dignified thing, a noble thing, and that is borne out in the Acts with these Bereans. I am sure that those in Thessalonica were noble enough, but scripture records that those in Berea “were more noble than those in Thessalonica”, and the reason for that commendation seems to be that they received the word “with all readiness of mind, daily searching the scriptures if these things were so”. So the word as received with all readiness of mind was found to be more effective as it was verified from the Scriptures. It is not - as has often been said - casting doubt on it, or seeking to disprove it but “daily searching the scriptures if these things were so”. That brings out firstly, the need to search the Scriptures and to become acquainted with them; and then the thought of “daily”. It is not when something comes in in a reading, and I will search the Scriptures to see if they fulfil it, but it is a “daily” matter, a habit. We need to get into good habits - I find it easy to get into bad habits, and a bad habit would not be reading the Scriptures enough, not valuing the Scriptures enough, but “daily searching the scriptures if these things were so” suggests that they valued the Scriptures, and they sought to be persuaded as to them. And that was a commendation; they were “more noble”: there was a dignity about them.

As to Corinthians, we had a word at the Supper, and the brother who addressed the Holy Spirit talked about the servant in Genesis 24, how typically “all the treasure of his master was under his hand”, v 10. So the Holy Spirit is really the key to these things. You can search the Scriptures all day without the Spirit and get no benefit from it. The key to understanding things, and coming into the benefit and secret of what is hidden is to rely on the Holy Spirit. Otherwise, it will be what we have here, that things have not come into man's heart. So we are to rely upon the Holy Spirit: God has revealed things by His Spirit, and we come into the benefit of what God has prepared for them that love Him. They are only available by the Holy Spirit: “the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God”. So the Holy Spirit searches things: He dispenses things. The hymn was also quoted:

Dispenser Thou of heav'ns store

(Hymn 158).

The depths of God and heaven's store must be closely aligned. It is a glory of the Holy Spirit, and an aspect of His service, that He “searches all things, even the depths of God”. You could not define or restrict what “searches all things” entails - “even the depths of God”. You might say there are depths of God in the saints of the assembly, and in everything

that God has done. You can take account of the depths of God in some way even in creation. There is an aspect there: the natural man can see something but the spiritual side is completely closed off.

So we need to rely on the Holy Spirit to enter into these things and benefit from them; and as we do so, then our life comes into accord with the One who is above, Christ who sits at the right hand of God where our minds are to be. It says, “seek the things that are above, where the Christ is”. In the address on Saturday, there was reference to the upper room; things were elevated. We are to gravitate to where our life is. If our life is in the things on the earth, that is where we will gravitate, that is where our interests are. The scripture we read in Colossians 3 presents the things that are on the earth as distinct from the things that are above, “where the Christ is”. And with the Spirit, we should gravitate to the things that are above; because that is where the Spirit leads us, that is what the Spirit's searching relates to. It does not relate to things down here, the Spirit searches what is for our benefit: the Lord Jesus says, “he shall receive of mine and shall announce it to you”, John 16: 14. The things of Christ are not based on what is on the earth, although they have their effect here. But we are to take our cue from what is above, where our life is hid with the Christ in God. So we are to find ourselves in another realm altogether, and that is where our interests lie.

Then it says, “Christ who is our life”. We might ask if this is so, but I do know that if we rely on the Holy Spirit, Christ is magnified and more attractive, and we are more bound up with Him and the things above, and less linked to the things that are below. There are things that we have to deal with, but what is the bent of our lives: is it here, or is it there? When we are manifested in glory, we will find that the things that are on the earth were for a time. The coming of the Lord is near, and in the meantime, we have tremendous resource in the Holy Spirit and in the ascended Man to draw our life and affections to Him in the glory above.

May God give us encouragement, for His Name's sake.

Linlithgow

1 May 2025

SOME IMPRESSIONS FROM 2 PETER 3

Paul A Gray

In a sense, the whole of 2 Peter 3 could be summed up in John's word in 1 John 2: 17, "And the world is passing, and its lust, but he that does the will of God abides for eternity."

Similarly, Paul says, "Wherefore we faint not; but if indeed our outward man is consumed, yet the inward is renewed day by day. For our momentary and light affliction works for us in surpassing measure an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen; for the things that are seen are for a time, but those that are not seen eternal", 2 Cor 4: 16-18.

Peter was seeking, in what would be his final injunction to the saints before he died, to ensure that their minds were turned away from the transient world, to what is unseen and eternal. It is striking that he directs them to Paul's ministry, no doubt having what was heavenly and spiritual in his mind. He reminds them that all things are under divine control, going back to the flood as evidence of God's judgment of sin, but then reminding them of the continuation of the day of grace in that, for the Lord, "a thousand years are as one day"; counting according to man's estimate of time is of no value, because time is God's creature, and He is not controlled by it.

The references to "your pure mind", to "holy conversation and godliness", and to "without spot and blameless" were I think an antidote to the increasing corruption of the world. And if it was so then, how much more so now. They were to look for a new creation in which righteousness would dwell - and it will dwell because there will be no opposition to it, because it is entirely new and sin and death have no place in it, because all opposition to the divine will is gone.

At the present time, grace reigns through righteousness; in the millennium righteousness will reign; and in eternity righteousness will dwell. This is consistent with Paul's teaching: "Then the end, when he [Christ] gives up the kingdom to him who is God and Father; when he shall have annulled all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign until he put all enemies under his feet.", 1 Cor 15: 24,25.

This is the time to take heed; the Lord said, "Watch". But it is also the time to grow, in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

“FAITHFUL IS THE WORD”

Martin A Brown

1 Timothy 1: 15

2 Kings 5: 1-19

Romans 15: 13

I seek help to use these two scriptures that I have read together, the first in Timothy and the second in Kings, beginning with where the apostle Paul says, “Faithful is the word”. He had said that he was an insolent overbearing man, (v 13); he knew what it was to walk as a man in the flesh and to use his power in that way. Insolence is a rude arrogant disrespectful way of being, and overbearing is a domineering character; that is what Paul was. He used his learning in the law to domineer and to use his power. That is what he says he was before but what he is saying here in verse 15 is something entirely different! He says to Timothy, “Faithful is the word”.

We have that in 2 Kings 5 where we have the story of Naaman, who was a great military captain of the king of Syria, “a great man before his master, and honourable”. He was honourable, doing what was right in the interests of the nation of Syria. But there was a little maid and she spoke faithfully: “Faithful is the word”. That little maid had been taken captive from Israel and she served Naaman's wife, and she said, “Oh, would that my lord were before the prophet that is in Samaria! then he would cure him of his leprosy”. She does not say that he *might* cure him. There was an example of the faithfulness of the word, no doubt, in it. The gospel preaching is “faith, to faith”, Rom 1: 17. I stand here as a preacher knowing that you can be saved; I stand here as a preacher knowing that if you are away from God that does not have to be the case any longer. I stand here knowing as that little maid did that as your state before God as a sinner, as Naaman's was as a leper, you can be cured tonight. That little maid had a wonderful simple, short message that she spoke in the presence and ears of Naaman's wife, and Naaman's wife as a faithful wife spoke to her husband, and as a result he went and spoke to the king! How many of us have been the recipients of a wonderful message from faithful wives or faithful sisters. How many sisters have been used to provide a faithful word, a word brought in faithfulness because of a desire for your soul, a desire for your blessing. Such faith as is operating in that person with a knowledge that God can save you, that you no longer need to remain in a state of sinful flesh.

Naaman was mighty, “a great man before his master, and honourable, for by him Jehovah had given deliverance to Syria”. I often like to think of Naaman; what a man he must have been, captain of the host of the armies of Syria. He would not have risen to the rank of that position without great trials; without many battle scars upon him, and yet despite all of that honour, it says, “but a leper”. He could do nothing about it! He could do nothing about that condition, and we, you and I, as sinful creatures can do nothing of ourselves about our condition. It says in the epistle to the Romans, “for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”, chap 3: 23. These sins are but a symptom of what we are, that is, that we have been born in sinful flesh, for “by one man sin entered into the world”, (Rom 5: 12), that was by Adam, and it has passed upon all of mankind; that is what we are, we can do nothing for ourselves.

And so Naaman's wife must have been earnestly desirous in love for her husband, and she carries this message that the little maid has given her to Naaman himself that he might know where to go for blessing. Tonight the preacher stands before you, because he has been asked to preach knowing that there is a Person the sinner must go to, knowing that there is a source of salvation, knowing that there is one Name given. I like to think that Naaman took this word of the little maid from the lips of his wife in faith; he must have done because he took it to the king. You can imagine him before his master: it says, “And he went and told his lord saying, Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel”. Think of the anticipation that here finally was an answer! Finally, through the words of this little maid, and the activity of faith in Naaman there was an answer, and the answer was going to involve that he had to move, he had to travel. His master says, “Well! go, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel”. And as it goes on it says he went and took many things with him.

It may be that one, having heard the gospel many times, is still thinking that they can be saved through something that he or she might do or something that they might bring. Elsewhere in the scriptures it says, “all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags”, Isa 64: 6. But still there might be the toiling to improve oneself. The gospel cannot be proclaimed and on the basis that you can work out your own salvation in terms of redemption and forgiveness of sins, that you can bring something to God that might make yourself look better; that is not God's thought at all! These gifts of gold, silver and raiment that Naaman was

going to bring to have something that might be accepted for his curing were not God's thought at all. He brought them to the king of Israel, who did not have the answer; but the little maid had spoken of the prophet in Samaria, but he brings this letter from his master to the king of Israel. Finally, "when Elisha the man of God had heard that the king of Israel had rent his garments, that he sent to the king, saying Why hast thou rent thy garments? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel. And Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the doorway of the house of Elisha". Sinful flesh will always seek to enlarge itself; it will always seek to have the answer itself; it will always seek to work out its own salvation, having no need of God; it will seek to build itself up in pride. That was what happened at the outset; Satan fell because of pride and sought to bring that into the heart of man through disobedience and independence, and that is what we see in Naaman here when he came to the door of the prophet. It says, "Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the doorway of the house of Elisha".

We have spoken of the word being faithful; I hope that you can accept that, that the word is faithful, the word goes out from faith, and it is going to your heart that there might be faith in activity with you to believe it. The word is faithful; all we can do is state what we know to be true. We cannot state anything else: all we can state is what we have come to know to be true ourselves: "Faithful is the word". Naaman knew that the little maid knew that she was saying something true, and it comes to him from his wife, but there was still another thing! He was going to have to experience that the word was worthy: "worthy of all acceptation". When Naaman comes to the door of Elisha, he thought that something was worthy in himself, 'I am a great man and I am honourable before my master; I am worthy of a reception: look at my chariots! Look at my horses, look at who I am!'. And Elisha does not even go out of the building. God cannot and will not tolerate fleshly pride; it says in the scripture, "all have sinned", and it also says, "and come short of the glory of God", Rom 3: 23. There is one Man before God, one standard before God, one Man who He will look upon, and in whom salvation is offered. Elisha sent a message to Naaman saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean".

Here again is the faithful word. We come to the preaching again, week after week going out faithfully; have you found it worthy of

acceptation yet? Or are you still fighting against it? "Naaman was wroth": at this point he would not bow in obedience. He absolutely refused to let the obedience of faith operate in his heart because of his pride, because Elisha did not give the word that he wanted to hear, because of the things that he wanted to do. But he was going to come to it that the word was "worthy of all acceptation". "Naaman was wroth, and went away and said, Behold, I thought, He will certainly come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of Jehovah his God, and wave his hand over the place, and cure the leper. Are not the Abanah and the Pharpar, rivers of Damascus". He was a nationalist, speaking of "rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them and be clean? And he turned and went away in a rage". It is not often that persons who are brought up in believing households go away in a rage from the gospel; I do not think I have ever seen it, but I have seen persons who have come into the gospel having not been brought up in a Christian household leaving in a rage, or leaving in a bad state. So perhaps you might not relate to this but perhaps you have heard the gospel and thought it was not for you. It is easy to think, 'Well, I still want to do my own thing, or I want to be cured in my own way, or I want to find happiness and joy through doing it my way', which is essentially what Naaman said.

But the story in 2 Kings 5 is a wonderful story because it illustrates these three sentences in Timothy: eventually it was through the faithfulness of the word of these servants, they say to him, "My father, if the prophet had bidden thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he says to thee, Wash and be clean". Here we have reached the point where Naaman in all his greatness and honour finds the word "worthy of all acceptation", and it says, "Then he went down". Speaking in gospel terms, he had reached a point in his own soul when he realised that he simply had to obey what God was saying. Have you reached that point? Have you reached the point in your life where, as having been born in sin, and having experienced the symptoms of that sinful state through the sins you have committed, perhaps the things you have done, and certainly the things you have thought, where you are prepared to go down?

I would like to tell you about a Man who has gone down already. It says in Timothy that that worthy word is about a Man, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners". That is a wonderful sentence in

itself; it leaves the believer almost in awe that Paul should say this, that such a One should come into the world to save sinners! Such a One as we contemplated earlier who is God Himself, having brought the very world into being, creating this very river that Naaman had to plunge himself into, should deem it necessary and an act of grace that He should come into this world to save sinners, that we might know the love of God, that we might know the relationship that God wants us to know and enjoy.

This matter of Naaman going down and plunging himself “seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God” is like him receiving and believing and accepting the full glory and benefit of the glad tidings. Paul does not say, ‘Christ Jesus came into the world to forgive you all your sins’, which in itself would be glorious; He is going to take them away all these wrong things that I have done! How wonderful that I should not feel the guilt of them any longer. Peter says to us, “who himself bore our sins in his body on the tree”, 1 Pet 2: 24. That is the sacrifice for sins that God required, that Jesus offered Himself on the tree, that holy sinless Offering; so God could pour out all His wrath upon Jesus, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”. But it is not only a matter of all the things that I have done wrong, and all the thoughts that I have had that have been wrong, are dealt with but my very sinful state; I believe that is what Naaman prefigured. It was a complete exercise, plunging seven times in the Jordan, the Jordan speaking of death and the acceptance of that as belonging to him. It says, “And his flesh became again like the flesh of a little child”. All these battle scars gone! What a wonderful thing that tonight through the gospel, and through the saving grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ, who did such a wonderful work of redemption at the cross, you can be saved from your sins. But you can also be delivered from the state that sins, never to walk in it again. I read a wonderful thing that a preacher once said, that by the Spirit now the believer can keep that sinful flesh under lock and key, JT vol 32 p145. Yes, it is there until Jesus Christ takes us to be with Himself forever, but the believer can now take account of it if it ever acts again, judge it and keep on walking in the Spirit; how wonderful is that? That is what Naaman suggests: coming into the good of it when “his flesh became again like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean”. It was the purity of a little child: that flesh which once before was pock-marked by the ravages of leprosy, now was made like the flesh of a little child.

That is what Jesus would do for you tonight because of the work that He has accomplished on the cross. He has suffered for sins; He has exhausted the wrath of God, righteously, so that God can righteously offer you forgiveness of sins, but as completing that work of atonement in suffering those three hours. Then He could say, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit", (Luke 23: 46), and it says He "bowed his head", John 19: 30. Here was this Man Christ Jesus who came into the world by His own volition, by His own act, and He would go out of this world by His own act, by bowing His head. It was the only way He could enter into death, for death could not claim Jesus; He had to enter into death Himself; and so He bowed His head and died, having committed His spirit into the hands of His Father who He had walked with through every step of His life.

My Saviour went into death, and He did it for me that I might be saved. And He shed His blood for me that I might be washed from the guilt of my sins. He went into the grave to remove the man, me, who offended God from God's sight that I might have peace, joy, happiness, satisfaction, the knowledge that my sinful state has been dealt with forever. And He has been raised that I might be justified and brought into the good of these wonderful heavenly blessings. My simple desire is that as Naaman did you too might find the word faithful, you too might find the word worthy, and you too might know that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners". It was not only to save you from your sins, but that word is "to save sinners" - the sinner is the vessel, that is, the person: God wants you! He wants you as a vessel, once filled by sin and sins and now by His glory to be filled with the Spirit for His pleasure eternally to praise and to worship the God of glory who gave such a One as Christ Jesus to save us and to deliver us.

What a message! We may not even scratch the surface, but it comes in its worthiness. Oh that you might be touched in your heart in relation to the way that Christ has gone, and that you might respond in the obedience of faith. Naaman is going to obey and he finds it worthy, what he has accepted, this act of plunging seven times and the fulness of what that exercise meant to him. He comes out of the Jordan with his flesh as a little child, and he returns to the man of God with all his company; he wants to give him something, but Elisha says, 'No'. Elisha will not take anything, but now this man is going to abound in hope even back in the position in Syria that he had.

He speaks to Elisha the man of God about his association; it is

not only his own future salvation but he is concerned now about how he walks and who he walks with and where he goes. Such was the cleansing power of these plunges in the Jordan that he is a changed man, and he is considering for God. Such therefore is the believer who is truly changed; he considers for God in what he does, and he thinks about where he goes. So there is the question of the house of Rimmon, which was a Syrian god, and his master worshipped Rimmon; but now Naaman is no longer going to worship Rimmon; he is going to worship Jehovah the God of Israel, knowing that there is no other God, and that is the case with the believer; there is one God, one true God, and Jesus Christ's desire is that you should know Him. It says, "the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent", John 17: 3. This exercise of Naaman's is lovely. It says, "when my master goes into the house of Rimmon to bow down there, and he leans on my hand, and I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon - when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, Jehovah pardon thy servant, I pray thee, in this thing". And what grace, Elisha says to him, "Go in peace". I think Elisha had confidence in Naaman that these things would be worked out; his heart was changed. He is a new man; he was going to do things differently, and though there were complexities in the life ahead as there is in all of life's circumstances, now Naaman trusted in God. Elisha had confidence that this man was going to work things out for God's glory and pleasure. That can be the same for us as believers on the Lord Jesus: may we be encouraged to be like that, to consider for God.

That is now possible for the believer by the power of the Spirit, and that is why I read in Romans 15. We have read, "Now the God of hope"; Naaman had been without hope, Paul used to be without hope, and now here he is writing about the God of hope, and Naaman now as having the flesh of a little child had all the hope in his heart. And Paul says, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing", that is like Naaman, "so that ye should abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit". That is another wonderful blessing that God would seek to give to believers today, the gift of the Holy Spirit. I do not sufficiently appreciate the gift of the Holy Spirit, nor His power, nor His Person, nor what He is able to do; yet God would give you the gift if you desire to receive it. He will give you that gift, but it also says that the Spirit is given and active in those who obey. That is, as you appreciate Jesus as Saviour, as your heart is activated towards Him in affection, as you seek to be ruled by Him as Paul was, changed from an insolent overbearing man, to someone who could say, "for me to live is Christ",

Phil 1: 21. Having wanted to stamp out that Name and everything He did, now here was a man who was walking in the power of the Spirit; that is available for you. So that all of life's circumstances can be met for the glory of God. What a victory God has secured here, firstly in Christ, and then in those who are believers in the Lord Jesus. The gift of the Spirit is a wonderful thing; "abounding in hope". Are you abounding in hope today? Is there anything that is getting in the way of that? Any cloud on the horizon? We all know what that is, but the encouragement here is that you would be filled with "joy and peace in believing, so that ye should abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit".

I trust it might be the portion of all and we may all be encouraged for His Name's sake.

Loanhead

16th March 2025